



State of Utah

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News Release For Immediate Release

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August 14, 2020

PRESS CONFERENCE

INTRODUCTION (Bradie Jill Jones, Utah Department of Agriculture and Food):

Welcome and introduction of Dr. Dean Taylor, DVM, State Veterinarian for the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food

STATEMENT (Dr. Taylor): Good afternoon and thank you for being here. Today the United States Department of Agriculture's National Veterinary Service Laboratory announced two confirmed cases of SARS-CoV-2 in mink in the United States. SARS-CoV-2 is the virus that has been linked to causing COVID-19 in humans. While the virus has previously been detected in other species of animals within the US, this is the first confirmed case of the virus in mink.

The mink that tested positive for the virus were located at two separate mink farms in Utah. Being that these cases occurred within our state, the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food is working diligently with other organizations such as the Utah Department of Health, the Governor's Office, and the CDC to address these issues today and moving forward.

The Utah Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory completed necropsies on several affected animals at the two mink farms in Utah last week after the mink operations reported unusually high mortality rates in their mink populations. Based on concerns at the Utah Veterinary Diagnostic Lab that arose from the necropsies, samples were sent to the Washington Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory at Washington State University. There a presumptive diagnosis of Sars Co-V-2 was reached and from there, the samples were sent to the National Veterinary Services Laboratories for conformational testing. This resulted in today's confirmation of SARS-CoV-2 in mink within the United States.

The affected farms have reported positive cases of COVID-19 in members of their staff. However, there currently remains no conclusive evidence that animals, including mink, play a significant role in transmitting the virus to humans. As it now stands, due to limited information and research, the risk of animals spreading SARS-CoV-2 to humans is considered low. Research continues in an effort to gain a comprehensive understanding of how different species may contract and transmit the virus.

Earlier this year SARS-CoV-2 was detected internationally in mink farms in the Netherlands. The affected farms also experienced higher mink mortality rates. The Utah Department of Agriculture and Food, along with collaborative agencies, has gleaned information from the reports and research that were conducted in the Netherlands.

In an effort to stop the spread of SARS-CoV-2, the affected mink farms have been completely quarantined. Utah is one of the top 5 biggest mink producers in the nation and as the Department of Agriculture and Food we are committed to addressing this issue boldly for the safety and future of mink farming in the state. The Office of the State Veterinarian will continue to provide updates as they become available. At this time are there any questions?

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